

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
January 9, 2014

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>  
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at  
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

***Board of Park Commissioners***

**Present:**

Antoinette Angulo  
Bob Edmiston  
Barbara Wright  
Jourdan Keith, Vice-chair  
Brice Maryman  
Yazmin Mehdi  
Tom Tierney  
Mazohra Thami

**Excused:**

Diana Kincaid

***Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff***

Christopher Williams, Superintendent  
Rachel Acosta, Park Board Coordinator  
Susan Golub, Strategic Advisor

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Keith calls the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Commissioner Keith asks for approval of the Agenda, the November minutes and the Acknowledgment of Correspondence; Commissioner Edmiston moves to approve the consent items and Commissioner Maryman seconds. The consent items are approved.

To hear and view the full meeting, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591331>

**Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Williams gives the Park Board an overview of the changes in Parks and a summary of the high visibility issues.

- Park Legacy Plan – The park board will be ramping up their work on the Legacy Plan; Superintendent Williams' hope is that the Park Board will inherit stewardship and accountability of the plan.
- There have been management changes at SPR:
  - Michele Finnegan will be the new Finance Director because Kevin Stoops is retiring (after 37 years!).
  - Kelly Guy is coming to us from Casey Family Foundation and Public Health and will be our new Recreation Director
  - Hazel Bhang comes from King County Parks and will be our new HR Director

- All three of these directors have a passion for staff – helping people thrive and succeed and Parks is lucky to have them.
- Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) at Seward Park – SPU has held 30 public meetings and went through a broad community process when deciding where to put the CSO tanks. Some of the neighbors are upset because they are anticipating the construction impacts. The neighbors would prefer it situated in the parking lot. Parks is looking at this through the lens of race and social justice in terms of how much it would affect the broader community versus balancing the needs of the people who live around the proposed site. Parks staff will be meeting with Ray Hoffman (SPU) and staff. Superintendent Williams clarifies that they will not be reopening the public process but simply reaffirming the process already done.
- Magnuson Park Controls and Incentives – Magnuson Park is a Historic district which means there are controls and incentives in place to maintain the historical integrity. The Magnuson Advisory Board are seeking more stringent controls and incentives and are looking to come to the Park Board. Commissioner Mehdi requests backup information regarding the Historic District designation.
- Smoking ban in parks – This issue has been around for many years; Parks will bring a ban to the Park Board in the near future.
- 14<sup>th</sup> Street Park – uses street right of way and takes some parking; the neighbors have been upset over the loss of parking spaces.
- Victor Steinbrueck Park – Parks, working in conjunction with the Pike Place Preservation Board, hopes to start design this year.
- Gas Works Park Play Area – Michael Shiosaki will come and brief the Park Board
- Seattle Asian Art Museum – Parks allotted \$9million for renovation as part of a matching fund; the museum did not meet their fundraising requirements. Parks is working with their board to allow the city to sue the money for asset management planned projects – i.e. roofs, irrigation, taking care of what we already have.
- Building 11 and Building 30 – There are lease issues – Parks has hired real estate and marketing firm to establish a market rate study. Are we receiving enough money?

### Oral Requests from the Audience

Carol Fisher – President of Lifelong Recreation Advisory Council, in 2010 29% pop was 50 or older. In 2010 there was a SLI that said there city would need to double their fund for the next 10 years to deal with the amount of seniors. Lifelong helps people maintain physical, mental and emotional health; she feels the Legacy Plan does not adequately support the seniors tsunami. [In the Investment Initiatives handout here] 2d is only a subset of seniors so does not represent long-term growth, 2a does not mention that seniors have long been underrepresented in the parks system. 1b does not take into consideration that all programs done in the parks system for seniors are done through Lifelong Recreation and not community center staff.

Sue Holloway, Lifelong Recreation board member, thanks SPR and says that Lifelong Recreation changed her life. She moved here to be closer to her grandchild and did not know anybody. Through Lifelong Recreation, she has met friends and become involved in the city.

Cheryl Klinker – Lake City Community Council member, implores Superintendent Williams to reach out to the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) about the new Seattle Housing Authority project on 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE which is a land bank site. On south side of the park, there is a proposed congregate housing site with no setbacks which means there would be no space between the park and the buildings and there will be no public design meeting. Superintendent Williams will follow up with DPD.

Ruth Williams – Thornton Creek watershed is thriving for the first time in a long time.

Max – feels that there should be 2 designations within the Seattle Parks system 1) parks – which connotes active users and 2) greenspace – which is natural areas. He feels that if Parks wants to change a greenspace to allow active use (mountain biking) then there should be another property that is traded for greenspace.

Chuck Dolan – Support natural areas and asks Parks to keep them natural.

Sharon LeVine – Parks traded 25 feet of land adjacent to the Queen Anne Bowl soccer field with Aegis; she realizes this is a very pricey piece of property but Aegis would like to turn the land into a 4-story apartment building. She implores Superintendent Williams and SPR to do something to acquire the land. She would also like the city-owned parking spots to be clearly marked.

#### Bicycle Use Pilot Project

Parks staff presented a slideshow and asked the Park Board to recommend to abstain from voting on the Bicycle Use Policy and to recommend a pilot project at Cheasty greenbelt. A Vegetation Management Plan was performed by Seattle Parks and Recreation staff in 2003. Cheasty greenbelt has problems. Parks staff use treeiage as a scale to measure the health of a forest and the amount of work needed; the scale ranges from best (1) to worst (9). The majority of the Cheasty Greenspace is a 6, which means the forest is ripe with invasive species and not in good shape. There are many non-native maples in the park due to plantings along the boulevard. The trees are choked by ivy, which needs removal. There remains a lack of native plant diversity. Furthermore, there are homeless encampments, garbage and yard waste, and social trails all throughout the greenspace. All of these factors contribute to prohibiting Cheasty from being a home for wildlife and a refuge for Seattle residents.

Parks staff review of the soil found the soil loamy and well drained, and the organic content is low. Most of the slopes are moderate enough to accommodate mountain biking trails. Staff did not see any evidence of slide activity on the slopes.

Mark Mead explains the major concerns from those opposed to the mountain biking trail have to do with the destruction of wildlife habitat, changes in users of the park and erosion. Some of the concerns would be alleviated by creating mountain biking trails that are less steep and avoiding the critical natural areas, such as wetlands. Furthermore, Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) would work with the Cheasty volunteers to ensure the trails are maintained and the greenspace protected.

The Cheasty mountain bike trail pilot project would be closely monitored for all potential issues such as, parking, erosion and the impact to wildlife.

Commissioner Mehdi wants to see some data about the wildlife that currently live in the Cheasty Greenspace. Mark Mead responds that they are working with The Audubon Society to track and study

bird habitats, however, it is very difficult to quantify the wildlife population. He emphasizes that a healthier forest will promote wildlife habitation. David Graves concurs with Mark that providing a baseline of wildlife is costly and very difficult to do and that the best indication of a healthy wildlife population is good food sources (ie. a healthy forest). Commissioner Edmiston asks if there will be eco-counters and Mark responds that Parks staff will perform spot checks to count users of the trails. Commissioner Maryman says he sees two communities that feel equally passionate on opposing ends of the Cheasty Greenspace/mountain bike park project; he feels this project could prove mutually beneficial. He suggests having signage that talks about the importance of the urban forests to educate the mountain bikers and foster an understanding and excitement about the natural world. However, Commissioner Maryman thinks the 1 year observation period is insufficient to properly observe the forest restoration and/or impacts to the forest and community by the mountain bike trail, and should be extended to 2 years.

Commissioner Keith, referring to Commissioner Mehdi's request for a wildlife survey, comments that she lives near the East Duwamish greenbelt and there were many species – coyotes, owls –living in the Greenbelt before the restoration was done.

Currently there are no real trails in Cheasty Greenspace, but there are about 1.25 miles of social trails; social trails are trails made by people using the same paths to get from place to place within the greenbelt.

Commissioner Tierney moves for a recommendation for staff to forego the policy update and start the pilot project. Commissioner Edmiston seconds. Commissioner Maryman suggests an amendment to add making the pilot project 2 years and Commissioner Mehdi seconds the friendly amendment. Seattle Parks and Recreation will move forward with the pilot project and forego changes to the Bicycle Use policy until the pilot project has been successfully completed. Commissioner Tierney specifies that this does not bar future mountain bike pilot projects that may arise. David Graves articulates that an update to the Bicycle Use Policy is still allowed.

### Legacy Plan

Susan Golub, Strategic Advisor for Seattle Parks and Recreation presents on the Legacy Plan and the work of the Parks Legacy Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee (PLCAC). She announces the public meetings that will be coming up in January:

- **Thursday, January 23**, International District/Chinatown Community Center, 719 8th Ave. S, at 6 p.m.
- **Saturday, January 25**, High Point Community Center, 6920 34th Ave. SW, 1 p.m. (free childcare will be provided)
- **Thursday, January 30**, Bitter Lake Community Center, 13035 Linden Ave. N, at 7 p.m.

The Committee is still in the process of producing a work plan for 2014 but the first meeting will most likely be a discussion around the big picture stuff and the second meeting will discuss operational issues.

Susan distributed a report that included all of the investment initiatives. The report summarizes and lists out all of the priorities for the department based on the findings of the Committee and the testimony heard and received from Seattle residents. The report does not include the size or type of recommended funding mechanism. In March, the final report will come out; this will contain input from the public meetings held in January and input from the Board of Park Commissioners. The City Council will vote by May 5 in order to get this on the August ballot. As previously stated, Susan would like

recommendation from the Park Board to ascertain whether the Commissioners feel the PLCAC have represented the goals and vision of SPR and the public. Parks staff have already received valuable feedback from the Commissioners which lead to include Trends in Land Management, and snapshots for Off-Leash Areas and P-Patch.

The Legacy Plan document is comprehensive; everything SPR does is included in this 1 document. In the Fall, SPR and the Board of Park Commissioners will need to start developing an implementation plan. This plan will include the following:

- Department accountability
- Performance management
- Performance measurement for the ballot measure and SPR

Susan requests the Commissioners re-read the plan and get comments to her by the end of January. She asks them to critique the plan but no copy editing. Susan will come back to the Park Board in February.

Commissioner Mehdi points out that the plan will help the department make decisions in times of scarcity. Superintendent Williams adds that the plan is a living document and will help drive how SPR uses their resources.

Commissioner Angulo acknowledges all the work SPR and the PLCAC have put into this document. Susan adds that all SPR staff should find themselves in the plan.

For more information about the Investment Initiatives and the updates to the Legacy Plan, please follow this link: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/legacy/committee.htm>

### **Oversight for new ballot measure**

SPR requests the Park Board steward the plan alongside the department by providing oversight for the new ballot measure. Susan reviews the levy oversight structure for other city departments; one can find that briefing paper [here](#). She emphasizes that if the Park Board took on this work, the Commissioners would be taking on a much larger role with the department which means more work. Susan will talk with staff from the other departments to gain a better understanding of the advantages and pitfalls of each oversight structure.

At this point, the Commissioners compliment Susan for all of the amazing work she does; she is a quiet powerhouse. Superintendent Williams agrees and adds that she is awesome.

Commissioner Keith, who sits on the previous Levy Oversight Committee, comments she really enjoyed the energy brought in by the “outsiders” to the Levy Oversight Committee.

Commissioner Maryman does not fully support a separate committee for the Challenge Fund because the plan is so complex and all-encompassing that if the Park Board is acting as oversight they should be involved in all aspects of the process. Commissioner Mehdi mentions the Library Board acted as the major oversight but they had an Opportunity Fund Committee that reported to the Library Board.

Commissioner Tierney states the Park Board should express their willingness and excitement to embrace the levy oversight role in a letter to the PLCAC. Superintendent Williams agrees, stating that Parks staff did not introduce the idea to the PLCAC in large part because he feels the Park Board need to

express interest. Commissioner Tierney feels that the Park Board should bless the plan but wonders what the timing should be on a recommendation and when it goes to City Council for their approval. Commissioner Mehdi adds that the designation of oversight should be spelled out in the legislation.

The Commissioners feel the Park Board's involvement is important because the Commissioners have been immersed in SPR policy and steeped in knowledge regarding Parks issues for a long time and the Board is a balanced group with varied interests.

#### Old/New Business

January 14 at 3pm, the Board of Park Commissioners will participate in a RACE workshop facilitated by the Office of Civil Rights. Independently, the Commissioners went to the RACE exhibit at the Pacific Science Center and this workshop will help the Commissioners use this information to make better decisions for Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Commissioner Mehdi served on a panel for the Seattle Neighborhood Coalition and found there was a lot of mistrust regarding the Metropolitan Park District. She noticed that there was a lot of confusion and concern and a lack of clear information. She recommends the Park Board and SPR work diligently at answering people's questions and assuaging fears if an MPD is chosen.

Commissioner Maryman mentions there has been a lawsuit filed against the Bicycle Master Plan. One can find more information about it here: <http://www.seattlebikeblog.com/2014/01/08/people-upset-about-westlake-bikeway-file-appeal-to-delay-entire-bike-master-plan-hire-missing-link-lawyer/>

ARC Subcommittee update – Commissioner Keith and Commissioner Angulo share this subcommittee but with Commissioner Keith's term up in March there will need to be another Commissioner on the ARC subcommittee. ARC has been working to prepare their own Legacy Plan and collaborating with Seattle Parks Foundation for the polling on SPR's Legacy Plan.

Commissioner Keith feels SPR should collectively address homelessness. Many of the people in encampments in Seattle parks are native people and she feels we should be the voice for those who do not feel they have one. Superintendent Williams says that in an urban park system a balance has to be maintained between value conservation with social issues. Seattle offers the highest level of human services. He recommends having the "Committee to End Homelessness in 10 years" come to a Park Board meeting. Perhaps a coalition could develop through which SPR could work with other departments to point people towards resources. The Commissioners wonder whether this is an area they should explore further.

**Commissioner Tierney moves the meeting adjourn; Commissioner Maryman seconds the motion and the motion carries. The meeting adjourns at 8:58 pm.**

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Diana Kincaid, Chair  
Board of Park Commissioners

DATE \_\_\_\_\_